

CHAPTER 5

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

Public facilities and services are important to the quality of life enjoyed by residents of the City of Helena. Facilities and services, such as the provision of municipal water and sewer services, encourage development within the City. All services and facilities provided under the authority of the City of Helena have short-term and long-term facility plans or strategic plans which will evaluate current and future needs and best management practices for providing services. A map titled [Helena Public Facilities](#) ([electronic link](#)) showing the location of key public facilities and services is located at the link or at end of this Chapter. It is important that implementation of all facility or strategic plans, including transportation, must be guided by and give consideration to the goals and objectives of Helena's Growth Policy.

Main sections of this Chapter:

Introduction	5-1
General Overview	5-1
Public Works	5-2
Parks and Recreation	5-10
Fire and Emergency Services	5-12
Law Enforcement.....	5-15
Other Community Facilities and Services.....	5-18
Public Facilities and Services Goals and Objectives	5-26

This chapter provides background information, identifies issues and present goals and objectives for a variety of City services and facilities, such as wastewater collection and treatment, water treatment and distribution, storm drainage, solid waste disposal and recycling, fire and police protection, parks, streets, and transportation. While these services and facilities are many and varied, they are all important components of the City's ability to ensure the health, safety, and general welfare of its citizens as they live, work, recreate and travel throughout the community.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

The wastewater and water systems protect public and environmental health while considering the future needs of the City as growth continues. The solid waste program provides an environmentally sound means of disposing of wastes through recycling, composting, and sanitary landfilling. Police and fire protection are fundamental components of life and safety protection, but also provide important educational, peacekeeping, and community service functions.

As the City's population and geographic area continue to grow, the City of Helena must look at ways to maintain or upgrade existing facilities and services so current users do not suffer a reduction in service while providing services to new development. It is common practice to make developers of new subdivisions and property owners located outside the City to pay for and construct new streets, water, and wastewater infrastructure needed to serve their



City-County Building

development to City standards when annexed. On the other hand, as new growth occurs demand increases on other City services that traditionally are not addressed as up-front costs for new development. As new facilities are planned, the cost of long-term operation and maintenance should be evaluated for budget implications.

PUBLIC WORKS

The Public Works Department is responsible for the overall supervision, control, budgeting, and coordination of an integrated system that includes the following Divisions: Engineering, Streets, Solidwaste, Fleet Services, Water/Wastewater Treatment and Utility Maintenance. The Public Works Department also develops and implements water, wastewater, stormwater, and transportation facilities master plans to ensure that short- and long-term public infrastructure needs are being addressed as the community expands and grows and establishes standards for the construction and maintenance of the City's infrastructure. Projects are monitored to ensure compliance with adopted City, County, State, and Federal rules, regulations, codes, and engineering standards.

WASTEWATER

The Wastewater Treatment Facility consists of the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Industrial Pretreatment Program. The main activities are to protect the health of the Helena community by providing primary and secondary wastewater treatment for the city residents. The City operates the wastewater system as an enterprise fund. (Enterprise funds are used to account for operations that are financed and operated in such a way that the costs of providing goods or services to the general public on a continuing basis is financed or recovered primarily through user charges.) The City has a long-standing policy that the costs of providing goods or services to the public will be financed or recovered primarily through user charges.

The Wastewater Treatment Facility, which became operational in 2001, was constructed to increase the size and efficiency of the secondary treatment process. The facility emphasizes ongoing preventative maintenance to achieve minimum operation and maintenance costs. The Wastewater Treatment Facility has a methane gas filter that lets the plant to use methane gas to meet some heating and energy needs.

The Wastewater Treatment Facility effluent water is disinfected with ultra-violet light and reused in the treatment plant for all irrigation and process water. The remaining effluent discharges into Prickly Pear Creek, which flows into Lake Helena and then to the Missouri River.



Airel view of the Wastewater treatment Facility , Picture furnished by Public Works Department

The sewer utility's conveyance system consists of a series of gravity sewer mains, sewer access structures, lift stations, and force mains. Annual repair and maintenance keep the facilities in proper working order. Major expansions and capital improvements are guided by the *2008 Wastewater Collection System Plan*. Typically, the City rate payers pay for both routine maintenance and larger projects.

Helena's Industrial Pretreatment Program developed in accordance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements, protects the environment and the community from adverse effects of industrial waste discharges, reduces heavy metal loading in effluent discharge and bio-solids, and protects the biological process at the Wastewater Treatment Facility and the collection system. The Industrial Pretreatment Program also guides the Wastewater Treatment Facility's acceptance of hauled waste. (For additional information on wastewater and water quality, see [Chapter 8: WATER.](#))

The Wastewater Treatment Facility serves customers primarily within the City of Helena. However, many wastewater customers are located outside the City most west of Helena. Many of these customers were connected to the City wastewater service during the 1970s and 1980s without a formal agreement requiring the property owner to annex into the City of Helena or waive the right to protest annexation. Now, people living outside the City limits who want to connect to City services because of a failing septic system or for other reasons must petition the City Commission for annexation or waive the right to protest annexation through a recorded development agreement. One option

for providing coordinated infrastructure to serve a greater geographical area would be to cooperatively plan for a regional wastewater treatment system, designed to City standards.

The wastewater treatment system may be extended by the City of Helena as it grows and develops along its boundaries. The wastewater treatment system may also be extended by the City of Helena to provide service to individual properties with failing septic systems on a case-by-case basis. The primary areas of growth are on the City's north, west, and southeast sides. In addition, the Public Works Division evaluates residential and commercial development projects to determine if wastewater capacity is adequate. The City of Helena has been asked to consider extending service to out-of-city subdivisions with failing septic or community treatment systems.

According to the 2008 Wastewater Collection System Plan the Wastewater Treatment Facility treats 1.7 million gallons of septic waste per year. However, the collection system experiences some deficiencies with sewer main capacity primarily because of under-sized sewer mains or inadequate sewer main slopes. Except for 12 gravity sewer main sections, the wastewater collection system is adequate to convey *average day* and *maximum day* flow conditions. Currently the *2008 Wastewater Collection System Plan* indicates there are no capacity issues for present and near-term flows, but the collection system is projected to be at or above 75% capacity by 2025. However, the City's ability to extend wastewater services is limited by the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) permit issued by the State of Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The TMDL permit limits the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus that can be discharged on a daily basis. (For additional information on the TMDL permit, see [Chapter 8: WATER](#)).

As development occurs, the system will protect the public health, safety, and welfare by providing for safe treatment and disposal of wastes. Installation of properly sized facilities in accordance with the facility plan will provide the most economical and cost-efficient services.

STORMWATER

Helena's municipal stormwater system is overseen by the Utility Maintenance Division. The stormwater system collects, transports, and discharges water and sediments generated by rain, snowmelt, or similar situations in certain portions of the City.

Stormwater management facilities are essential to protect people and property from the harmful effects of sediments, floods that can erode land, damage buildings, and wash out streets and utilities. Stormwater drainage facilities include natural or man-made structures to collect, convey, hold, divert, and discharge water, including storm sewers and detention/retention basins. These facilities convey excess runoff from individual properties, buildings, and streets to an acceptable point of discharge. In some cases, runoff is routed through a detention basin to slow the rate at which it is released downstream, or runoff may be retained in a pond or basin.

Helena's storm-water conveyance system consists of streets, inlets, pipes, open-channel drainage ways, and intermediate storage and treatment basins. The City is divided into five drainage basins: West Side, Last Chance, Davis, Bull Run, and the Airport. The City crew cleans all of the storm-water inlets yearly and performs hydraulic cleaning (jetting) of the pipes. In addition, approximately 25,000 feet (4.7 miles) is inspected annually with a television camera to inventory and determine pipe condition. In June 2006, Helena was granted authorization to discharge storm water from its municipal storm water system into Ten Mile and Prickly Pear Creeks.

As the City expands and develops, recommendations from the Stormwater Management Plan will be implemented. In addition, the City's 2010 Stormwater Ordinance provides guidance and outlines restrictions for managing runoff quantity and quality of existing systems and new development. The ordinance regulates land-disturbing activities that create soil erosion, sediment, and runoff during construction activities. (For additional information on stormwater and water quality, see [Chapter 8: WATER.](#))

WATER

Helena's municipal water system is managed by the Water Treatment Division and the Utility Maintenance Division. The Water Treatment Division is responsible for acquiring and treating water provided for domestic use, fire suppression, and irrigation uses. The Utility Maintenance Division maintains and upgrades the water distribution system to meet the demands for City water customers. The Utility Maintenance Division locates and turns water on and off at property owners' curb boxes and makes taps for new and replacement services. In addition, the Utility Maintenance

Division oversees the City leak detection, main flushing, repair and replacement programs, and fire hydrant flow testing and repairs; installs water meters for new construction; and repairs existing water meters. The Utility Maintenance Division conducts all water sampling and submission for testing to be sure that water meets all Environmental Protection Agency and Montana Department of Environmental Quality standards for health and safety. The Water Treatment Division also encourages water conservation through educational pamphlets mailed with the water bills.



Tenmile Water Treatment Plant, Picture from Water Facilities Plan

Helena's municipal water system draws from Canyon Ferry Reservoir (on the Missouri River), Ten Mile Creek, Chessman Reservoir, and Scott Reservoir. The City has a 40-year contract with the Bureau of Reclamation for 11,300 acre-feet of water per year from the Canyon Ferry Reservoir for the City's use. Currently, the City uses approximately 3,000 acre-feet of water per year from this source. Water from the Canyon Ferry Reservoir is fed into the Helena Valley Regulating Reservoir, then through an underground pipe to the Missouri River Treatment Plant located northeast of Helena. This water is fed into the system, and the excess is stored in Malben and Woolston reservoirs.

Helena owns the first and second water rights on Ten Mile Creek, west of town. The first water right is for 325 miners' inches of water per day, and the second is for 225 miners' inches, or approximately 8.9 million gallons of water per day. Ten Mile Creek, with headwaters located west of town above Rimini, is joined by several feeder creeks below Rimini. The City of Helena has headgates on these creeks to divert the water into a concrete pipeline connects directly to the Ten Mile Water Plant. If the creek does not supply enough, water can be added from Chessman or Scott reservoirs located southwest of town. The water supplied from these reservoirs is not counted against the City's water rights.

When the Missouri River plant is operating, the Missouri water serves the east side of town, and the Ten Mile water serves the west side of town. During the winter, the Missouri plant is shut down, and all of the water is provided from the Ten Mile water system. (For additional information on water and water quality, see [Chapter 8: WATER.](#))

Expansion of the Municipal Water System

As the City of Helena grows and develops, the municipal water system must continue to provide adequate water capacity through reservoirs and water storage tanks and pipelines to satisfy the City's demand for water and meet fire protection standards. Reservoir and storage tank improvements are paid for through the City of Helena capital improvement program and grants. However, rate payers are the major source of funding for system improvements. Water main extensions are initially financed and constructed by developers, based on the overall requirements of the water utility, and are then turned over to the City.

The timing and location of new facilities is determined by development pressure and the City of Helena's adopted *Water Distribution and Facility Plan*. The City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County are developing an Urban Services Area to guide the extension of services as the City of Helena annexes property. The establishment of this area will enable the Public Works Department to anticipate and design new facilities and pipeline extensions for the newly annexed lands in response to requests by developers for service.

The City utilizes nine water storage reservoirs within the water distribution system: Nob Hill, two Woolston Reservoirs, Malben Reservoir, two Winne Reservoirs, Hale Reservoir, Upper Hale Reservoir, and West Side Reservoir. These reservoirs have been developed to provide adequate water capacity to meet peak-hour water demands.



City Transfer Station

According to the 2005 *Water Distribution and Facility Plan*, the current maximum demand is approximately 13 million gallons per day (mgd). The *2005 Water Distribution and Facility Plan* includes some expansion of the City Water Service Area. Based upon the 2005 Water Distribution and Facility Plan, the projected demand for water will be approximately 15 mgd in 2025. The City currently treats enough water to meet present demand and has reserved enough capacity to meet the demand of future growth. (For additional information on water quantity, see [Chapter 8:WATER](#))

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Solid Waste Division manages the collection of household refuse and yard waste for the City of Helena. The City's goal is to maintain efficient, convenient, and cost-effective solid waste collection service. The Solid Waste Division provides curbside collection of trash and recyclables for residential users and commercial businesses. In addition, the City's solid waste management includes landfilling, recycling, and composting wastes. The City Solid Waste Transfer Station takes in an average of 45,000 tons of refuse per year. Transfer Station users are charged a fee based on the amount and type of material being disposed. City residents receive a transfer station permit that allows each residential property owner to drop off 1 ½ tons of trash per year. It is important for the City to continue to provide efficient and effective solid waste collection and disposal services, along with opportunities for recycling and composting, which will minimize the amount of waste going to the City Transfer Station.

The City of Helena offers several recycling programs, such as:

- Household Recycling
- Automotive Wastes
- Appliances
- Household Hazardous Waste
- Blue Bag Recycling
- Tramp Truck Service

The Tramp Truck provides collection service for typical household rubbish that does not fit into a household dumpster, such as bagged grass, leaves, branches, furniture, etc. Materials such as tires, batteries, oil, paint, large appliances, hazardous waste, and construction debris from home renovations cannot be picked up by the tramp truck. The Tramp Truck is a service provided by the City to residential customers only and is funded by Solid Waste Assessments on residential property taxes.

In addition to the services listed above, the City also cooperates with volunteer recycling programs, including the semiannual Trash for Trees program, quarterly plastics drives

and other events. Recycling efforts could be increased to include additional household items such as plastics, (For more information on recycling, please see [Chapter 7: ENVIRONMENT](#).)

FACILITY PLANS

All identified impacts to the City of Helena Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater Treatment facilities must be mitigated by developers or property owners to extend City services to new or existing development. The costs associated with the extension of service to these areas are initially financed and constructed by developers or owners of the property. This practice ensures that the cost of development does not affect current customers within the City of Helena. These costs are based on the overall requirements of the facilities or infrastructure needed to serve the area or property, and are then turned over to the City of Helena.

Wastewater Collection System Plan

The City of Helena Public Works Department regularly reviews the *2008 Wastewater Collection System Plan* and the *1998 Helena Area Wastewater Treatment Facility Plan (HAWT)* to develop a Capital Improvement Program that meets the area's needs.

The *2008 Wastewater Collection System Plan* and the 1998 *HAWT* guide the development of the wastewater system. The facility plans have identified a variety of proactive improvements for treatment, transmission, and storage which are required in order to maintain service as the City grows in population and area. These plans also identify areas outside the City limits where failing septic systems are located. In addition, these plans discuss the requirements of what is needed to bring these properties onto City services. The facility plans also includes a map showing the location and sizing of future major distribution system components.

The municipal wastewater system and the facility plans support providing a means of treatment and disposal of sewage generated by urban density development that could not be adequately done by septic systems. It also supports prevention of groundwater contamination and preservation of public health by removing harmful organisms before release of treated water.

Stormwater Treatment Plan

The *Storm Drain Master Plan*, most recently updated in 2003 discussed the development of the Stormwater Treatment System. The plan contains information on stormwater locations, discharges, effects, and needs for mitigation. The *2003 Storm Drain Master Plan* identified needed projects to be included in the City's Comprehensive Capital Improvements Program (CCIP). In 1990, the City established a Storm Drain Utility to raise revenue through property assessments to fund the projects listed in the CCIP. The CCIP represents one mechanism for financing the maintenance and replacement of public infrastructure. The City requires drainage plans and the installation of the identified improvements for proposed subdivisions and residential, commercial, or industrial developments that involve large impervious surfaces.

The *2003 Storm Drain Master Plan* provides for mitigation from development impacts of stormwater drainage. These mitigation measures can be integrated into a variety of open spaces that provide for community character. The *2003 Storm Drain Master Plan* also supports preservation of wetlands, associated habitat and wildlife species by reducing water pollution, and can be used to support the urban forest and other landscaping with stormwater.

A stormwater ordinance was adopted in 2010 to establish methods for controlling the introduction of pollutants into the municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) to comply with requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) permit process.

Water Distribution and Facility Plan

The 2005 *Water Distribution and Facility Plan* has identified a variety of improvements for treatment, distribution and transmission which are required in order to maintain service as the City grows in population and area. The 2005 *Water Distribution and Facility Plan* also includes a map showing the location and sizing of future major distribution system components.

As development occurs, the system will serve to protect the public health, safety, and welfare by providing for safe treatment and distribution of water for the City of Helena. Installation of properly sized facilities in accordance with the 2005 *Water Distribution and Facility Plan* will provide the most economical and cost-efficient provision of services.

FINANCING IMPROVEMENTS

The City operates the wastewater/stormwater collection system, water distribution system and solid waste collection system as an enterprise funds. Enterprise funds are used to account for operations that are financed and operated in a manner similar to private business enterprises. The cost (expenses, including depreciation) of providing goods or services to the general public on a continuing basis is financed or recovered primarily through user charges.

The City's general policy is that development will pay its own way. The City has development standards to achieve its long-range vision, to extend cost-efficient infrastructure constructed to urban standards, and use a variety of financing mechanisms. Options to finance improvements include, but may not be limited to, property taxes, special fees and assessments, impact fees, tax increment financing (TIF) districts, special improvement districts (SIDs), and grants.

Publicly funded improvements could be targeted for certain areas, and efforts should be coordinated with public and private partnerships. Recent partnership examples include the Nob Hill water tank and the Custer/I-15 interchange. All funding options from public and private sources should be considered and pursued, if warranted, and can be used as incentives to direct growth and to achieve specific goals of this Growth Policy.

Public Facilities and Services Issues

The following public facilities and services issues have been developed as a result of input and analysis by City staff and from comments received at several public outreach forums during the Growth Policy development process. The need to address these issues form the basis for the development of Growth Policy objectives and policies.

The issues related to public works indicate there is a need to explore options that support and balance infill development on vacant and underutilized land served by, or in close proximity to public works infrastructure and compatible with surrounding neighborhood. In addition, the input indicated the need to explore ways to apply public-works development requirements equally to public agencies and private entities. There is also a need to create a public works funding system that will divide the cost of providing infrastructure and protecting the environment between the public and those developing land.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The City of Helena Department of Parks and Recreation Department oversees seven divisions including Parks and Open Lands, Recreation, Weed Control code enforcement, Tree Maintenance, Aquatics, and Bill Roberts Golf Course. Parks and recreation facilities are among the most important contributing factors for local quality of life. Parks and Recreation staff works closely with volunteers to provide quality facilities and programs throughout the year. The programs and facilities are designed so that people of all ages, abilities, and income levels have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of quality recreational activities.

The City has 2,297 acres of park and open space and a variety of recreational facilities, including approximately 30 parks, bike/pedestrian trails, public swimming and wading pools, Aquatics Park, a public golf course, tennis court complexes, a skateboard park, outdoor skating rinks, community gardens, two natural parks and more. A map titled [Helena Parks, OpenSpace, and Trails](#) (electronic link) showing the location of major parks and recreational facilities is located at the link or at end of this Chapter.



Mount Helena City Park

Major Parks and Recreational Facilities:

- Memorial Park
- Kindrick-Legion Field
- 1700-acre trail and open lands system
- Last Chance Gulch Walking Mall
- Batch Fields
- Siebel Fields
- Ryan Park
- Northwest Park
- Centennial Park
- Fire Tower Park
- Centennial Trail
- Bill Roberts Golf Course

The City of Helena *Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan*, adopted in October 2010, identifies current and future parks and recreation and facility needs. The *Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan* includes information and maps of existing parks and discusses the maintenance of existing parks. This plan is also the primary document used to identify future park, trail, and open space needs. The plan provides guidance for new park development through the subdivision process and land acquisition recommendations. As the City of Helena grows more parkland and open spaces will be needed.

PARKS AND RECREATION ISSUES

The following parks and recreation issues have been developed as a result of input and analysis by City staff and from comments received at several public outreach forums during the Growth Policy development process. The need to address these issues form the basis for the development of Growth Policy objectives and policies.

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan update adopted in October 2010 identifies some of the gaps and potential services and opportunities in providing a variety of parks and recreational opportunities for all ages, and abilities. However, it continues to be a challenge to find the necessary funds to maintain the public's ever expanding desire for more open space, neighborhood/community parks, recreational services, and facilities. Protecting the natural areas, such as Helena's open spaces and surrounding mountains and water ways and even some wetlands, will also be important to retain their recreational value through proper management. Therefore, management decisions should also consider the appropriate use of environmentally sensitive areas to protect their integrity. The health of the surrounding forests has recently come to the forefront with concerns related to fire danger and pine beetle-killed trees in the wildland-urban interface. As a result, managing the surrounding forests has become a multi-jurisdictional issue affecting more than just recreational values.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES



Fire Station #1

The City of Helena Fire Department is responsible for services primarily within the City but also works with several other local fire districts to respond to emergencies outside Helena. Thirty-six firefighters and one administrative staff member provide fire protection and emergency medical services, supported by two stations and special equipment and apparatus. All firefighting personnel are trained at the Emergency Medical Technician Basic (EMT-B) level.

The City of Helena Fire Department provides trained and equipped personnel to prevent and respond to fires, accidents, chemical releases, natural disasters, medical emergencies, etc. The Department's activities are divided among four functions, with the focus on preventing fires through educational and code enforcement programs as well as responding to fires and emergencies when necessary. The four functions are: Fire Suppression, Hazardous Materials, Emergency Medical Services and Fire Prevention.

FIRE SUPPRESSION

The primary purpose of a fire department is to fight fire. This is carried out by the members of the Fire Suppression Division, which uses three pumpers, one aerial vehicle, four Rapid Response Vehicles, and five Fire Administrative vehicles. Equipment and two stations are strategically located within the City. The main station is on the east side of the Civic Center; the second station is located on the east side of Helena.



Aerial Truck

Not all fires occur in structures within the City. The vast urban/wildland interface has great potential to be threatened by wildfire. The City of Helena Fire Department is equipped with specialized personal protective equipment, wildland firefighting vehicles, and tools that are appropriate for fighting wildland fires.

One way of evaluating fire protection services is a “Fire Suppression Rating” assigned by the Insurance Services Office (ISO), a national organization formed by insurance companies that provides independent evaluations of cities across the nation. ISO ratings range from a high of 1 to a low of 10. Property owners in cities with high ratings benefit from lower fire insurance costs. One of the City of Helena Fire Departments goals is to achieve the highest possible rating for the citizens of Helena. In 2008 the Fire Department initiated the process to have the ISO rating for the City re-evaluated in 2008 the City ISO rating was a 4. The ISO re-evaluation was completed in September 2010 and the City’s Current ISO rating remains unchanged.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Many facilities in Helena use and produce hazardous materials. In addition, airplanes, interstate traffic, and the railroad transport hazardous materials through the Helena area.

The Helena Fire Department has the primary responsibility to respond to hazardous materials incidents in the City and the greater Helena area. The Fire Department established a Hazardous Materials Response Team with all members trained to the “Technician” level to respond to hazardous materials incidents and participate as an integral part of the State of Montana’s hazardous materials response efforts. Through agreements, the City of Helena Hazardous Materials Response Team became one of six “regional” teams that provide hazardous materials emergency response to all counties in Montana.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

The Helena Fire Department provides emergency medical care to the citizens of Helena. Consistent with trends throughout the United States, medically related emergencies are approximately 70% of the annual responses. The City of Helena Fire Department is licensed by the State of Montana at the Advanced Life Support “EMT-Intermediate” level.

The Helena Fire Department operates in a tiered response system with St. Peter's Hospital Paramedic Ambulance service. When an individual has a medical emergency, both agencies are dispatched through the 911 system at the same time.

FIRE PREVENTION AND INVESTIGATION

Two members staff the Fire Prevention Bureau, which provides Fire Prevention Week activities, hotel/motel safety classes, food-service safety classes, fire extinguisher classes, code enforcement, plan review, building inspections, and fire investigations throughout Helena.

The Fire Prevention Bureau also handles a wide variety of complaints from concerned citizens, issues permits for hazardous activities, and administers a “key lock-box system” throughout the community that enables fire crews to enter buildings efficiently.

As the City of Helena continues to expand its boundaries, additional staffing, stations, and services will be necessary to serve new neighborhoods.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES ISSUES

The following fire and emergency services issues have been developed as a result of input and analysis by City staff and from comments received at several public outreach forums during the Growth Policy development process. The need to address these issues form the basis for the development of Growth Policy objectives and policies.

Public input and the *2006 Lewis and Clark County and City of Helena Fire Protection Service Review Study* identified the following issues: The Helena Fire Department is a general fund entity for budgeting purposes. However, it has been noted in the review study that alternate funding sources should be explored such as developing fire service area. Currently the City of Helena has an ISO rating of 4. In order to maintain this rating or to lower the rating the fire department needs to maintain adequate staffing and equipment to meet the current and future workload and demands of new residential and commercial development and annexations. In addition the review study identified the need for a third fire station and development of a new training site for fire and emergency response personnel, which would aid in an ISO evaluation. Since the City of Helena is also the State capitol there is a larger than normal percentage of property value and workload due to publicly owned buildings such as the State Capitol complex, federal buildings and City and County owned structures. None of these entities pay into the General Fund. The fire department utilizes mutual aid agreements and the fire department must operate more regionally with the other departments located in Lewis and Clark County. In addition to fire and emergency issues, the need for training programs for public safety personnel to minimize emergency response times continues. Disaster, mitigation, emergency, and recovery plans should also be reviewed and updated as needed.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

LAW ENFORCEMENT FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The Helena Police Department provides timely, efficient crime prevention and maintenance of peace and order. The Helena Police Department's main station is located in the Law Enforcement and Detention Center, close to the downtown central business district. The Department also has a sub-station located in the Helena Regional Airport Terminal. As the City grows in population, geographical area, and in housing and businesses, a proportionate increase in crime, accidents, and calls for service can be expected to increase the demands on the Helena Police Department.



City/County Law Enforcement Center

The Police Department provides 24-hour law enforcement to protect lives and property for a diverse population of residents, visitors, and businesses. It also promotes community-oriented prevention/education programs that stress interaction between the Department and the community for preventing and solving crimes and works closely with the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office. The Police Department's activities are divided among four functions, with the focus on upholding the laws and ordinances that keep citizens safe and preventing crime through education and law enforcement programs, as well as responding to emergencies when necessary. The four functions are: Patrol, Criminal Investigations, Support Services, and Animal Control.



Patrol Car

Patrol

The Patrol Division is staffed with 31 patrol officers. Patrol officers work a 9-hour shift with the first hour consisting of a briefing and in-house training. The Helena Police Department provides patrol officers with all the required equipment for duty including firearm, Taser, OC canister, Expandable baton, duty belt, uniforms, and footwear.

The Patrol Division is organized as the primary call-response unit of the department. The patrol officers are the most visible and recognized employees of the Department and are largely responsible for cultivating the positive image of the Department. Patrol officers are expected to respond in a timely manner to dispatched calls for service and to be aware of and aggressively pursue traffic and criminal offenses as they are discovered during the course of normal patrol. Patrol officers complete the initial investigations of most criminal and traffic cases and solve policing problems within the community.

Criminal Investigations

The Criminal Investigations Division is composed of five Detectives and an Evidence Technician. The Criminal Investigations Division's responsibilities include the in-depth investigation of financial, property, person crimes, domestic violence, vice narcotics, and special investigations.

The division has a representative who is the police department's coordinator to the Helena Area Crime Stoppers Board and Helena's Most Wanted program. The division also monitors pawnshops and property being pawned. Weapons sales and related violations are also monitored.

The Criminal Investigations Division serves as liaison with the County Attorney's Office, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Montana Department of Justice, and other outside agencies. It also provides specialized training to the department and training and education programs to the general public, private sector, and especially children, about safety and crime prevention through programs such as DARE, Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC), Drug Task Force, and other special projects. In addition, the Department provides School Resource Officers for middle schools and high schools in the Helena School District.

Support Services

The Support Services Division includes law enforcement and 911 dispatchers and the law enforcement records division. The Support Services Division is a joint operation between the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County. The Helena Police Department is contracted to provide this service.

Records

The Records Division is the central repository for all law enforcement reports and records generated by the Helena Police Department and Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Department. This division provides alarm permits, disseminates reports and local arrest record checks, registers sex and violent offenders, and collects fees for services and copies.

The Records Division also maintains the arrest records for the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Department. These records are considered confidential. Individuals can get their personal record for arrests in Helena and Lewis and Clark County for a fee after providing a signed authorization.

911 Dispatch

An up-to-date communications system is vital to public safety and welfare. The City of Helena/Lewis and Clark County Consolidated 911 Center answers all calls for emergency assistance. The call center is located in the Law Enforcement and Detention Center building and is managed by the Helena Police Department. Also vital to public safety is the Detention Center that is located in the Law Enforcement Center, managed by the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office. The City uses the detention facility for adults.

Dispatchers for the Helena Police Department receive basic communications training, Power Phone, Emergency Medical Dispatch, Law Enforcement techniques, and Fire Dispatch training from the Montana Law Enforcement Academy.

Dispatchers monitor all law enforcement, fire department, and emergency services radio traffic. They are responsible for routing and dispatching all incident and emergency calls that are received by the 911 dispatch center.

Animal Control

Helena's animal control officers are employees of the Helena Police Department. The animal control officers handle animal calls within the City limits and promote community-oriented education programs that stress responsible pet ownership.

The animal control officers enforce all City ordinances and laws for all animals located in Helena and handle all animal related complaints such as dogs at large, barking dogs, vicious animals, animal bites, and missing animals. All animals impounded by animal control officers are transported to the Lewis and Clark Humane Society.

LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

The following law enforcement issues have been developed as a result of input and analysis by City staff and from comments received at several public outreach forums during the Growth Policy development process. The need to address these issues form the basis for the development of Growth Policy objectives and policies.

Input from the public meetings identified the perception of a need for better enforcement of speed limits and other traffic laws, especially in neighborhoods near schools. In addition, safety of walking routes and street crossings were mentioned as well as the need to have street design standards that facilitate traffic safety and accessibility. The public input suggested that landscape standards could be reviewed and amended to create more defensible space and accommodate crime prevention measures. There is a need for more crime prevention programs for youth. Continuing to provide timely responses to calls as the City's population and geographic area grow, while providing a high level of patrol and prevention activities, and protection services currently offered was also important to the public. The police department is the first agency to be contacted in the City to handle complaints ranging from wildlife encounters to transient travelers who pass through or reside for a time in the City. However, as with the fire department, these issues are linked to the need to maintain

adequate staffing and equipment to meet the current and future workloads, the demands of new residential and commercial development, and annexations and population growth.

OTHER COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

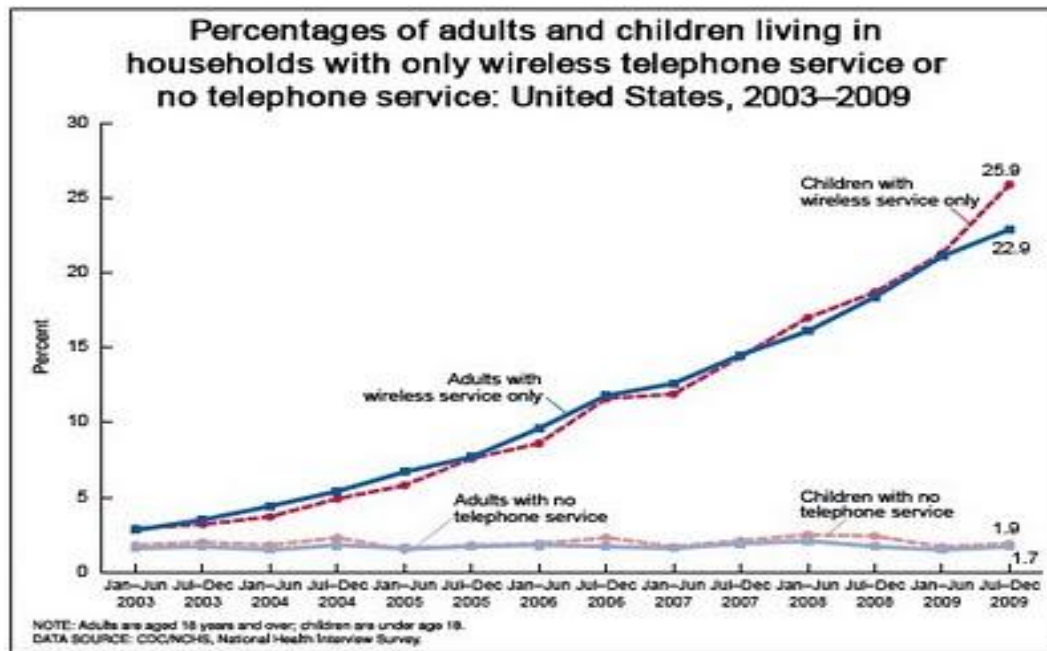
Anticipating and preparing for the needs and safety of Helena's citizens is essential to maintaining a high quality of life within the community. However, non-government community facilities are important to the City as well. These facilities and services provide citizens with other necessities such as power, heat, schools, health care, and library services. Government and non-government community facilities are often viewed as anchors or stabilizing influences in the neighborhoods where they are located.

PRIVATE UTILITY PROVIDERS

Many services within the City are provided by private utility providers instead of by the City, including electric power, natural gas, cable television, phone services, and wireless communications. It is important that the City work closely with these various service providers to ensure that citizens' utility needs are adequately provided into the future. Areas requiring close coordination include easement acquisition and placement, converting overhead utilities to below ground, installation and maintenance of utilities within City rights-of-way, and siting of new facilities (such as cellular towers).

Electrical power is supplied in the Helena area by Northwestern Energy. Although there are hydroelectric dams in the Helena area, the power consumed in Helena comes from a portfolio of resources across Montana and the Pacific Northwest. NorthWestern Energy purchases a significant portion of its resources at market prices. Therefore, the utility company is interested in stabilizing and lowering future costs by acquiring its own generating resources and by encouraging demand reduction through energy efficiency.

Telephone services in the area are provided by a number of entities. Qwest has historically been the principal provider and maintains a network of lines (principally underground). The system has accommodated population growth in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, since deregulation of the industry and advancements in fiber optic and cellular communications technology, other communications providers also are servicing the area.



Currently no information is available for the percentage of households in Helena or Helena area that are cell phone only households. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been conducting National Health Interview Surveys (NHIS) since 2003 to track the number of American homes with only wireless telephones (also known as cellular telephones, cell phones, or mobile phones). The CDC surveys indicate approximately 22.9% of American homes have wireless only telephone service, a percentage that has been increasing steadily since 2003. In addition, the CDC surveys indicate the percentage of children living in wireless-only households is also growing (see related chart).

Natural gas is distributed in the Helena area by Northwestern Energy, coming primarily from Canada in a pipeline along the Rocky Mountain Front. The pipeline splits northwest of Helena, with one branch heading towards Missoula and other to Helena and eastward. The Yellowstone Pipeline has one main pipeline in the Helena area which flows east to west carrying finished petroleum products. It has a branch line that flows north to Great Falls from the Helena terminal.

The City should continue to devise ways to conserve scarce resources and explore alternative energy resources and/or relationships to help residents and businesses deal with higher energy costs and prepare for increased City energy bills. One City action was to establish a climate change task force in 2008 that recommended some resources that may affect energy usage.

EDUCATION

Educational facilities in Helena include the public school system, a private four-year liberal arts college, a two-year college of technology that is part of the University of Montana system, plus several private schools. The City continues to work in a cooperative partnership with all of the educational providers, including East Helena and Helena school districts, to address issues related to the community's economic vitality, City financial resources, and shared recreational resources. Cooperative efforts presently include Safe Routes to School, the Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP), recreational facilities, and subdivision review. Quality schools are very important indicators of good places to live and work, and are often cited as a reason people choose to live in Helena.

Future school enrollment in Helena will affect the City of Helena, especially in regard to land use and transportation. Similarly, decisions the City makes will have impacts on the school district. For example, if the City approves a new, large residential development, will the school district have the capacity to provide classroom space, teachers, transportation, etc. to serve the new population? It is very important that the City and School District work closely together and keep each other informed of future plans.

Primary and Secondary Education

Helena School District #1 is a significant property owner in the City and adjacent areas and serves the majority of the City of Helena and the Helena Valley. According to the November 2009 Enrollment Projections for Helena School District #1, the School Districts total student population for 2009 was 8,154 students. Currently the School District operates eleven elementary schools, each providing kindergarten through fifth grade, that serve 3,458 students; two middle schools (grades 6 through 8) located in the City that serve 1,685 students; and two high schools with a student population of 3,011 students combined. The November 2009 Enrollment Projection report indicates that the student population will increase steadily over the next several years. The projected student population for the year 2025 at the 11 elementary schools is estimated at 3,984 students; two middle schools 1,963 students and the two high schools will have 3,363 students. The total enrollment for all schools in 2025 is projected to be 9,310 students combined.

The High School District of District #1 covers the entire planning area. It operates two high schools in Helena, which provide grades 9 through 12. As mentioned earlier the current high schools serve 3,011 students. Each school recently expanded to accommodate anticipated increases in student population.

Project for Alternative Learning (PAL), an alternative high school that is a program of Helena Public Schools, focuses on dropout prevention for grades 10 through 12. Students from the two Helena high schools may self-refer to PAL or be referred by parents, teachers, and/or a counselor. The program has approximately 67 students. About one-third of the students participate in an onsite therapeutic day treatment program.

Five private schools also operate in the City: Helena Christian Academy, Helena Community School, Rocky Mountain Christian High School, First Lutheran, and St. Andrew School.

Carroll College

Carroll College, a private liberal arts college, was founded in 1909 by the Catholic Diocese of Helena as an independent, four-year, private, liberal arts college. The campus is located on 64 acres in town and has a current enrollment of approximately 1,500 students. Carroll offers 34 majors and numerous minors, and associate and special degree programs that position students for jobs and admission to graduate, law, and medical schools. Carroll College consistently ranks as one of the best colleges in the West.



Carroll College Campus

Helena College of Technology of the University of Montana

Formerly the Helena Vocational-Technical Center, the college was founded in 1939 when the Office of Public Instruction designated five training centers for Montana. This state designation was reaffirmed by the state legislature in 1969 when five vocational training centers were established by statutory law. The Montana Legislature in 1989 authorized the transfer of governance of the state's five Vocational-Technical Centers to the Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education. This transfer ended joint governance by the local school districts and the state Office of Public Instruction. In 1994, the Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education restructured the Montana University System, which resulted in the Helena Vocational-Technical Center becoming affiliated with the University of Montana. The institution was then renamed the Helena College of Technology of the University of Montana.

The University of Montana - Helena College of Technology (UM-Helena) is a two-year institution for higher learning, offering 32 technical proficiency Certificates, Associate of Applied Science, Associate of Arts, and Associate of Science degrees, as well as study toward upper-level and graduate-level programs in cooperation with other Montana University System institutions to approximately 1,200 students per year.

EDUCATION ISSUES

The following education issues have been developed from comments received at several public outreach forums during the Growth Policy development process and staff analysis. The need to address these issues formed the basis for the development of Growth Policy objectives and policies.

Public comment indicates the need to accommodate a growing student population for the Helena School Districts which is supported by the November 2009 Enrollment Projections figures for the School District. The School District currently has two closed elementary school buildings that may accommodate some student enrollment increases within the City. However, the closed facilities and existing facilities may need to be expanded to accommodate more students in the future. In addition, the School District has two elementary schools located outside the City limits (Jim Darcy and Warren School) that do not currently receive City water or sewer service. Therefore, these facilities are served by aging well and septic systems that will eventually need to be updated or connected to City service. The public also indicated the need for further expansions to the existing high schools or the construction of a third facility located in Lewis and Clark County. The Helena School District will be developing a facility plan in 2011.

HELENA REGIONAL AIRPORT

Airport Background

The first airport in Helena was located at what is now known as Bill Roberts Golf Course. However, due to conflicting uses at this location the airport was moved to its present location east of the City and officially dedicated in July of 1928. During the late 1930s and early 1940s the south terminal was constructed and remodeled several times, and a control tower was added to the structure with one of the early remodels. An outside baggage claim was constructed for the south terminal during the 1970's. Many new facilities were constructed on the south side of the airport property during the 1960s and 1970s.

Construction on the present day terminal started in the mid 1970's and was dedicated in 1978. The current facility went through a major remodel that included expanding the baggage handling area; updating the roof system, adding a second jetway, and installing more



Helena Regional Airport

office and conference and meeting rooms. Upgrades were made to the security of the terminal to meet Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Regulations for access control to the facility. This renovation and remodel project was completed in 2006.

Currently the Helena Regional Airport is situated on approximately 1400 acres, most of which are within the Helena city limits. There are a variety of locations on airport property that could be leased due to the potential to be used for both aeronautical and non-aeronautical uses. Currently the airport property supports the following uses: an National Guard Helicopter battalion, the Rocky Mountain Emergency Services Fire Training Facility, a fire dispatch facility, an Aerial fire retardant base, a number of Federal offices, Boeing Helena's aircraft component manufacturing operation, Costco, Lee Enterprises, and other businesses as well as many aviation hangers and facilities for commercial and general aviation.

Current passenger service is provided to four major hubs (Seattle, Salt Lake City, Denver and Minneapolis) on Horizon/Alaska Airlines, Skywest/Delta and United Express.

Airport Operations and Funding

The Helena Regional Airport Authority is a political subdivision of the State of Montana. The airport itself is owned and operated by the Helena Regional Airport Authority. The Authority consists of a seven-member Board that establishes the rules and operating procedures by which the airport operates.

The Helena City Commissioners appoint three of the members and the Lewis and Clark County Commissioners appoint three members. The seventh seat is a joint City/County appointment. The Airport Director is responsible for the day to day operation and overall management of the airport.

The Helena Regional Airport must operate like a commercial business since it receives no local tax funding or mills. However, the County Commission could decide to authorize mills for the airport's operation. Currently the Airport must fund its operational and maintenance needs through revenues generated from various aeronautical and non-aeronautical activities located on airport property. In addition, the Airport does receive Federal and State funds for approved Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport Improvement Program projects.

Current Airport Projects

Airport Master Plan Study:

A comprehensive Airport master Plan Study is currently underway to identify existing capacity of the airport system and outline future developments necessary for the airports operation.

Security Upgrades:

A number of security enhancements are scheduled to be installed to increase the security of the airport and comply with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Regulations for access control.

Personal Protective Equipment and Fire Apparatus Upgrades:

The Helena Regional Airport will be upgrading Personal Protective Equipment and Fire Apparatus. This project involves replacing the fire suits and gear worn by airport firefighters in compliance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) requirements. In addition, a new 1,500 gallon Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting Vehicle for the Rocky Mountain Emergency Services Fire Training Center has been purchased. The new vehicle will replace the current 1996 E-1 engine that is used at the aircraft fire training facility to train airport firefighters.

AIRPORT ISSUES

The following airport issues were identified as a result of comments received at several public outreach forums during the Growth Policy development process. The need to address these issues form the basis for the development of Growth Policy objectives and policies.

Public meeting participants identified competition for passengers with the other airports located within 125 miles of Helena as a concern. Additional public comment indicated that the airport attracts a high number of professional business travelers to Helena due to the perception that Helena does not have the same tourism appeal as other Montana cities. In addition the draft Airport master plan identifies the need for the Airport to diversify its means of generating revenue by developing lands owned by the Airport Authority that are not intended for aeronautical purposes.

PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Lewis and Clark County Public Library system consists of the Main Library on South Last Chance Gulch and three branch libraries (East Helena, Augusta, and Lincoln). Library use in Lewis and Clark County has steadily increased along with population over the past 10 years. As the City's boundaries expand and its population becomes more diverse, new and expanded library facilities may be needed.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The City of Helena/Lewis and Clark County Health Department provides many different services to the community. As the City's population grows and becomes more diverse, the Health Department will face new challenges in providing needed services. The Health Department offers health education, collects data and analyzes health issues, and offers services such as water testing and healthcare clinic services. The Health



St. Peter's Ambulance Service

Department staff promptly investigates and follows-up on environmental spills and citizen complaints affecting the environment. Staff will test drinking water for dangerous levels of contaminants. The Health Department provides information, education, and contacts regarding issues as Chronic Wasting Disease and the West Nile Virus.

NEIGHBORHOOD AND COMMUNITY CENTERS

The Neighborhood Center is multi-functional facility that serves a number of different populations. The Neighborhood Center is owned by the City of Helena, and activities carried out there are administered by the Rocky Mountain Development Council. There are also several community centers in Helena that serve specific populations, such as senior and youth centers that are run by private or nonprofit groups.

HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

Two hospitals serve the City of Helena: St. Peter's Hospital and the Fort Harrison Veterans Administration Hospital, located west of town. These hospitals have undergone significant expansions during recent years. In addition, the City of Helena provides education and health services through the Cooperative Health Center run by the City/County Health Department. There are also many clinics in Helena, ranging from health maintenance organizations to clinics that provide specialized care and treatments (e.g. dental clinics, eye care clinics, alternative medicine clinics, and chiropractic clinics).



St. Peter's Hospital

HEALTH CARE FACILITY ISSUES

The following health care facility issues have been developed as a result of input and analysis by City staff and from comments received at several public outreach forums during the Growth Policy development process. The need to address these issues form the basis for the development of Growth Policy objectives and policies.

Public input indicates the need for future clinics is determined primarily by Helena's population growth. As the Helena area continues to grow, the construction of new or expanded clinics is expected. Most new medical and offices are developing on the southeast side of town, near St. Peter's Hospital. The need to establish a medical corridor and a zoning overlay district has been mentioned at several focus group discussions and are further discussed in the [ECONOMIC](#) and [LAND USE](#) chapters.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals:

- A. Protect public health and ensure public safety.
- B. Protect and enhance the natural environment; promote efficient use of community infrastructure, services, and transportation networks; and conserve resources.
- C. Educate citizens for emergency preparedness and the protection of life, property, and environment.
- D. Provide and maintain quality park facilities, open spaces, and recreational opportunities for citizens of all abilities and age groups.
- E. Promote conservation, workplace safety and other community values by investing in buildings, vehicles and programs encompassed in facilities and services that support green building design, workplace ergonomics and energy efficiency.

Objectives:

- 1. Make public health and public safety high priorities, and address potential hazards for areas located adjacent to and within the City.
- 2. Encourage infill development on vacant and underutilized land and full utilization of properties currently served by, or in close proximity to, infrastructure with a scale and quality that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
- 3. Apply development requirements equally to public agencies and private entities.
- 4. Create a public-works funding system that will divide the the cost of providing infrastructure and protecting the environment between the public and those developing land.
- 5. Implement the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.
- 6 . Continue to provide a safe community for citizens and visitors through education and mitigation for adequate response to, and recovery from, disasters and emergencies.
- 7. Maintain safety as people travel in the community.
- 8. Continue training programs for public safety personnel to minimize emergency response times.
- 9. Develop and maintain disaster, mitigation, emergency, and recovery plans.
- 10. Support joint planning efforts to provide coordinated infrastructure in the future.
- 11. Increase and support recycling for Helena residents.